

Force. Thank you for your leadership, Shirley. I want to thank Dr. Lloyd Ogilvie and Dr. Daniel Coughlin for being here as well. I'm honored that you both came. And Lloyd, thank you—and Shirley—for your beautiful comments. It really meant a lot.

When the first Continental Congress met at Carpenters Hall in Philadelphia, one of its first official acts was prayer. In 1779, the Day of Prayer Proclamation asked that "Almighty God would grant the blessings of peace to all contending nations, freedom to those who are in bondage, and comfort to the afflicted."

During our Nation's darkest hour, our Nation's greatest President called America back to prayer. President Abraham Lincoln urged his fellow citizens to "look to the redeeming and preserving grace of God." And Americans wisely accepted President Lincoln's counsel.

America is a country of faith. And throughout our history, in times of crisis and in times of calm, Americans have always turned to prayer. And this year's event has special meaning. Since the attacks of September the 11th, millions—millions—of Americans of every religious faith have been led to prayer. They have prayed for comfort in a time of sorrow, for courage in a time of fear, and for understanding in a time of anger. They have prayed for wisdom in the midst of war and for strength on the journey ahead.

These prayers have been made in private homes and in houses of worship, alone and with others, in moments of doubt and in times of thanksgiving. These prayers have

been heartfelt, and they have made a tremendous difference. Prayer for others is a generous act. It sweeps away bitterness and heals old wounds. Prayer leads to greater humility and a more grateful spirit. It strengthens our commitment to things that last and things that matter. It deepens our love for one another.

Prayer also deepens faith, reminding us of great truths: Evil and suffering are only for a time; love and hope endure. Even in the world's most bitter conflicts, prayer reminds us of God's love and grace, His mercy and faithfulness, the hope He provides, and the peace He promises.

Prayer is central to the lives of countless Americans, including Laura's and mine. We have been blessed by the prayers of millions of Americans. We could ask for no greater gift from our countrymen.

I want to thank you all for coming here to the White House to celebrate this special day, for your devotion to prayer, and for your love of this country, and for the Lord who has blessed it for so long.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Stanley Thurston, director, Heritage Signature Chorale; Amy Burton, soloist, New York City Opera, and her son, Joshua; Lloyd J. Ogilvie, Senate Chaplain; and Rev. Daniel P. Coughlin, House Chaplain. The National Day of Prayer proclamation of April 26 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Statement on Congressional Action on Farm Security and Rural Development Legislation

*May 2, 2002*

I congratulate Chairman Combest and the other House and Senate conferees for a job well done in completing the "Farm

Security and Rural Development Act of 2002."

I am pleased that the compromise agreement on the farm bill resulted in better balanced commodity loan rates; spending that is no longer front-loaded; and the strongest conservation provisions of any farm bill ever passed by Congress. The final provisions of the farm bill are also consistent with America's international trade obligations, which will strengthen our ability to open foreign markets for American farm products. While this compromise

agreement did not satisfy all of my objectives, I am pleased that this farm bill provides a generous and reliable safety net for our Nation's farmers and ranchers and is consistent with the principles I outlined.

I thank the conferees for their hard work and urge Congress to send the farm bill to my desk promptly for signature to help ensure the immediate and long-term vitality of our farm economy.

## Remarks on Senate Inaction on Nominations for the Federal Judiciary May 3, 2002

Thank you all. Some of them were pretty good—and one of them was really good, right, Al? [Laughter]

I want to thank you all for coming, and I want to talk about an important subject, and that's our judiciary. One of the true strengths of our democracy is a judiciary that is fair, impartial, and independent. Our courts depend on the dedicated service of men and women who are called to decide disputes. Yet today, there is a vacancy crisis on our Federal courts. Both the President and the United States Senate have constitutional responsibilities to address vacancies on the Federal bench. I have nominated 100 outstanding jurists for these posts, but the Senate thus far has not done its part to ensure that our Federal courts operate at full strength. Justice is at risk in America, and the Senate must act for the good of the country.

I want to thank Al Gonzales; he's *mi abogado*. He's been my lawyer; he's been—served on the—as secretary of state in Texas; he's served on the U.S.—or the Texas Supreme Court; he and his able staff work long hours to really find the best possible nominees for the bench. And I want to—I appreciate Al's leadership, and I appreciate those who work with Al, on behalf of the White House, for their long hours.

I want to thank you all for coming. Thanks so very much for your interest in this important subject. And it's an important subject. I mean we're talking about an incredibly important part of our country. And I want you all to help spread the word about how serious the vacancy crisis is. You pay attention to this issue, and you can help advocate what I'm about to call the Senate to do.

This is Law Week—or Law Day, and it's a day we celebrate the legal profession in our democracy and a day set aside to recall the role of law in our society. This year's Law Day theme is "Assuring Equal Justice for All." And that's a noble theme, and it's a noble calling. We're all proud of our judiciary. We know that justice and security and prosperity can flourish only in a society governed by law.

We're grateful to our Federal courts; we're grateful for the vital work that they play in our American system. Federal judges are key to make sure America functions well. Every day, they uphold the rights of an individual, protect the innocent; they punish the guilty. Their rulings are essential to the rule of law in our Nation. To discharge their responsibilities effectively, the Federal courts must have judges.